



CITY OF SAINT PAUL Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

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DATE:

January 3, 2012

TO:

Comprehensive Planning Committee

FROM:

Lucy Thompson, Principal City Planner

SUBJECT:

Greater Lowertown Master Plan and Plan Summary

## **BACKGROUND**

On November 15, 2011, Ellen McPartlan, chair of the Greater Lowertown Master Plan Task Force (GLMPTF), and I briefed the Committee on the draft *Greater Lowertown Master Plan*. At that time we asked you to recommend that the Planning Commission release the Plan Summary for public review on December 2, 2011 and set a public hearing for January 13, 2012. Subsequent to that action, the Chair of the GLMPTF agreed to suspend release of the draft Plan Summary to rework the Historic Preservation chapter to address concerns raised by Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) staff. Therefore, the Planning Commission did not release the Plan Summary on December 2, 2011.

Over the past four weeks, staff and the GLMPTF have been working together on revised text for the Historic Preservation chapter, and on cleaning up some "loose ends" in the draft. We are now asking that the Comprehensive Planning Committee recommend release of the *Greater Lowertown Master Plan Summary* by the Planning Commission at its January 13, 2012 meeting, with a public hearing to be held on February 24, 2012. A copy of both the *Plan Summary* and full Plan are attached for your review, but only the *Plan Summary* will be the subject of the public hearing (and adopted by the City Council).

## KEY CHANGES IN THE DRAFT PLAN SUMMARY

In large part, the *Plan Summary* is identical to what you saw in November. However, there are some key changes.

- 1. A new initiative has been added: Preserve the District.

  With Lowertown being both a National Register and local Historic District,

  HPC staff felt strongly that preservation should be one of the core initiatives in the Plan.
- 2. The Historic Preservation Chapter has been rewritten, expanding on core ideas in the original draft and adding strategies to guide the neighborhood's and HPC's work in Lowertown.

The new Historic Preservation chapter speaks better to the shared priorities regarding preservation in Lowertown, and is a more useful guide for future preservation-related efforts in the neighborhood.

Comprehensive Planning Committee January 3, 2012 Page Two

3. The recommendation regarding character areas (Land Use and Urban Design chapter) has been deleted.

Without a complete understanding of how they were created or how they were intended to guide future investment in Lowertown, the concept of "character areas" seemed to confuse neighborhood representatives as well as City staff.

4. The historic preservation and arts/culture histories in the original Introduction have been merged and simplified.

The story of Lowertown is a shared history of investment in its historic buildings and its creative community. Setting the stage of how those two efforts went hand-in-hand to create the unique neighborhood that Lowertown is today is important to understanding its present and future.

5. Corrections to graphics have been made.

Parks and PED staff discovered errors in some images and the wording accompanying some images.

6. The Implementation matrices have been updated.

The revised matrices are more complete (but continue to be a work-in-progress as the task force evolves and other stakeholders become involved).

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission release the *Greater Lowertown Master Plan Summary* for public review on January 13, 2012 and set a public hearing date of February 24, 2012. The *Plan Summary* will eventually be adopted by the City Council as an amendment to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, at which point the *Historic Lowertown Plan* (1974) will be decertified.

## Attachments

- Greater Lowertown Master Plan Summary
- Greater Lowertown Master Plan (full document)